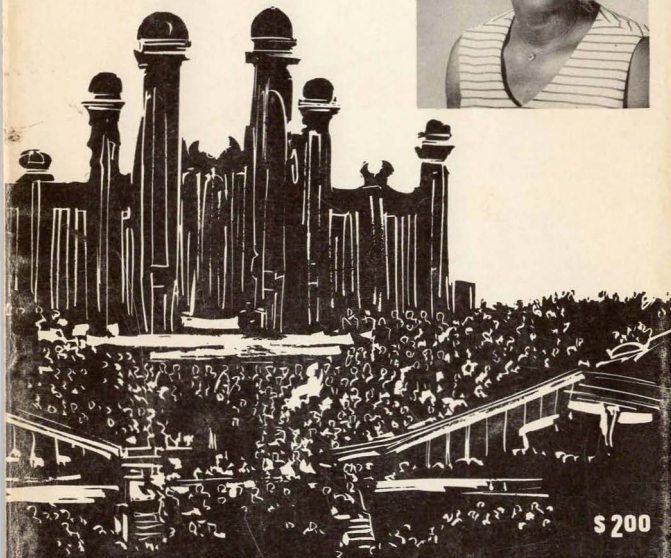


BLACK MORMON

tells her story

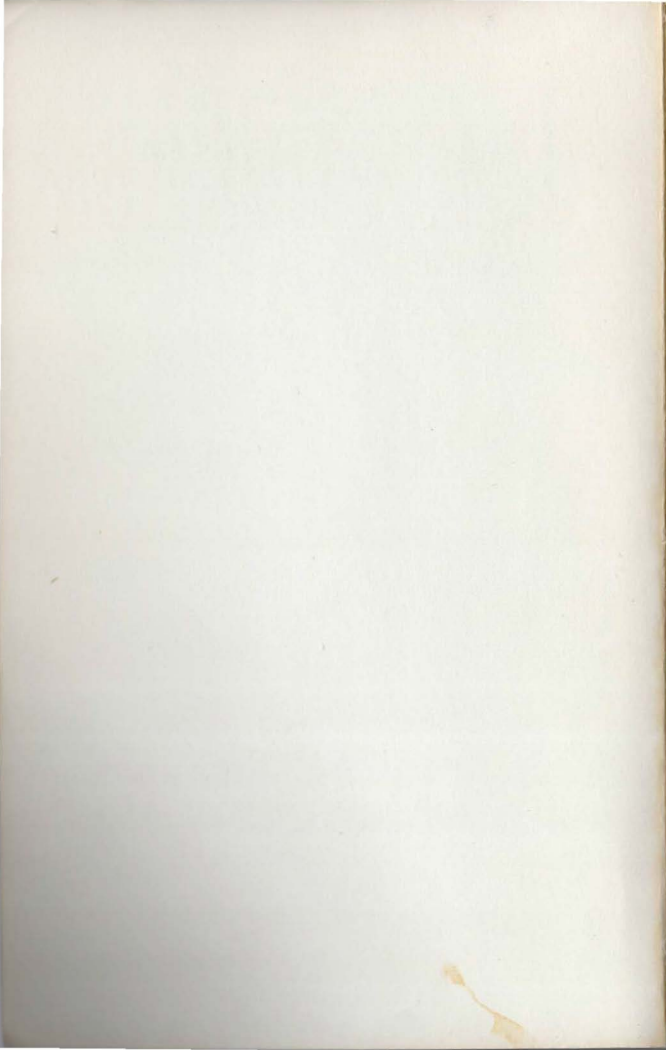
"The Truth Sang Louder Than My Position."

WYNETTA WILLIS MARTIN



\$ 200

WHY CAN'T THE NEGRO HOLD THE PRIESTHOOD
Supplement by John D. Hawkes



Wayne L. Smable

BLACK MORMON

tells her story

The Truth Sang Louder Than My Position. "

WYNETTA WILLIS MARTIN

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PREFACE

This book is an autobiographical account of a Negro woman's search and finding of a spiritual oneness with God through her conversion and baptism to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (or Mormon Church).

CITY OF OGDEN • UTAH

HEART OF THE GOLDEN SPIKE EMPIRE

MAYOR
Dr. Bart Wolthuis
ASST. MAYOR
Karl O. MacLaraine
CITY MANAGER
Richard L. Larsen

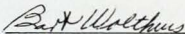
FORWARD

Wynetta Clark Martin is a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and sings in the Tabernacle Choir. Through the love and encouragement of her parents she developed her musical talent to a very excellent professional degree and used her ability to sing in many churches and other groups. After joining the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, she had a great desire to serve her Father in Heaven through music and felt strongly the urge to become a member of the Tabernacle Choir.

This is a story of the inner feelings and desires of a black person who wanted to be able to establish dignity not only in herself, but also in the eyes of all persons. It is of interest to note the great struggle she faced in today's society and the help she received in achieving some of her goals. The reader will feel a genuine empathy for the plight of all individuals who strive to rise above the circumstances in all walks of life. One becomes more aware that we do not solely determine our own destinies without aid from many and above all guidance from a loving God, contrary to the popular notions and philosophies of men.

For the caucasian, this book gives a lucid account of the struggles the blacks face in being accepted as a full partner in today's complex and sometimes disturbing world. We begin to understand the many problems and frustrations the minority people face each day as they strive to walk the same path of life as we.

The author, through the love and understanding of a kind lady, finds that there is a Father in Heaven who has concern for all of his children and that there is a plan of salvation which was provided for the benefit of all. The blacks not of the LDS faith will have a better understanding of the saving principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ and that within His church there is a place for all of the children of God.



Bart Wolthuis
Mayor of Ogden

DEDICATION

To my beloved parents:

Grace and Sentell Willis Sr.

Daughters: *Pauletta Rochell Martin*
and Ruth Ann Martin

Brothers and Sisters:

Freddie, Diane, Carolyn and Anthony

APPRECIATION PAGE

First, giving thanks to my Father in Heaven for His many blessings. Secondly, to my parents for their Christian upbringing. Thirdly, Barbara Weston for her shining example. Lastly, I also must mention Isabelle Vause, Helen Kennedy, Orvilla Stevens, Mayor Bart Wolthuis, Richard P. Condie, the good Bishops of the Church and the endless list of good members who have helped me and given me acceptance in the Church.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

My name is Wynetta Martin. I am a Negro and a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, more commonly called the Mormon Church. My story is not about Negroes, nor is it about Mormons or their church doctrine. It is about my life and how I became convinced to join the Mormon Church. I am now, happily, and willingly, a member of the Church. Many cannot understand why a Negro would want to join the Mormon Church. This too I will attempt to explain, at least from my personal experience.

Perhaps the fact that I quite eagerly, even greedily embraced, and still do, the promises of my church, a church that has been recently the target of many, who have accused us of bigotry, segregation, and racism, and even in the most liberal of minds, my church has been cursed and despised, because it will not allow the people of my race the privileges, as yet, of the Priesthood, given to all other races. Perhaps this practice has instilled a great hatred and contempt for me in the eyes of my own people, and even in the eyes perhaps of many white people, both members and non-members, who learn of my conversion - I cannot know what is in all hearts, and I cannot know the thoughts of all I meet; I do not judge them, nor do I ever try to convert or convince anyone of my race, even my parents, that this is the "true" Church. It is right for me, but I cannot hope they will understand, and if they

would not find peace in conversion to Mormonism, as I have done, I would not wish it for them. I think many times the acceptance has been more difficult on my part, acceptance of myself for what I am--obviously, colored; and accepting white people's kindness and friendship inside the Church, as not a patronizing of me, but one of honestly accepting me, although, of course, this has not been universal with all members. The hurts of many, many small slights, both imagined and real, heal, but always I feel faced with new wounds opening, as I try to turn away from snubs, and from derision, from forced toleration that is suffocation and an insult to me on the part of some narrow-minded people both inside and outside the Mormon Church. Some people really believe that all Negroes are "hotel maids" or "Southern mammies" who have gone to their glory, but remain alive in the hearts and labels and breakfast tables on a syrup bottle! A real mammy with a kerchief wrapped around her head, and acres of impossibly white teeth, gleaming like a banner against a black sky of skin is the only image of the Negro race some people comprehend!

CHAPTER 2

MY EARLY YEARS

MY EARLY CHILDHOOD

I too have been cruel many times, because of a childhood spent in Los Angeles, where I learned that the word "Black" meant *me*! I soon realized that he who spat an obscenity or insult first got hurt least, so I did it, with a chip growing into a real king-sized piece of lumber, weighing down my shoulder.

I recall my childhood with such a mirage or rainbow of feelings! Each one is intangible, just beyond my grasp while wavering in a mist beyond a vision, breathlessly caught up forever in my universe which reflects the cloudiness and spaces in my past.

HUNGRY SPIRIT

I have always been a hungry person; yet no matter how I gorged myself socially, intellectually, spiritually, or even literally on food at the table, nothing ever satisfied me; no party was ever quite right, quite perfect enough for me--no book, when ended, ever fulfilled me, nor answered those harbored questions inside my oceans of soul; still erasable waves would sweep and wash away the sandy shores of my consciousness. I could not be quenched by God in the churches of my childhood, for I could not find Him, and if I wanted to eat something, *very much*, and I ate

and ate till I could eat no more, again I was never satiated. Somehow my hunger was never filled, and I began a grasping, groping, and frantic search for my fulfillment. Only in my music, which I have loved since a child, could I come close to voicing my agonizing needs--my hunger with no name, my void that could not be filled, because no tangible substance in my life could be called upon to fill it, and I waited and I prayed in hollow songs, and in verses, and most often in a strange solitude--for God was not there, and I knew it! Still I prayed - or tried to!

PATENT SHOES

I remember one day in my very early childhood, I believe my mother was preparing me for my first day of school. My shoes--brand new and "hard-come-by" by my parents--were, to me, the most hideous of objects, and I had to wear them, for I could not break my mother's heart as she beamed at those black, shining, high-topped, laced, and buckled patent leather fiends! I hated them, but I loved my mama, and as she crooned to me while combing the last lock of my hair flat into place--I believe it was a melody about satins and laces and smells of cologne -- I can't really remember, but that song made me as angry as those shoes did! I wanted to scream out at my sad, sacrificing mother, "Shut up! Don't you even know what the world is wearing? Not satins, and laces, and colognes, not in

the first grade! Not high-topped shoes, with heels! I am a little girl, not a pickinny!" But the words did not escape. So my first semester in the first grade was spent barefoot! I would leave the house, shod in my shining black shoes, and as soon as I rounded the corner my shoes were, "Dismissed," but not once were they ever missed! Many of the children in the school area *did* come to school barefoot because of financial strain, but I think now if my mother had known, as much as she scraped to buy those shoes for me, that I *was* ashamed of *them* and even *her* at so early an age, she would never have forgotten it, nor possibly forgiven it either. Fortunately for me, she never knew. By the time the second semester came, I had saved enough to buy a cheap pair of red flat shoes that no one would stare at, because practically everyone had these same shoes in one variation or another! I think now that even then as a child, I was fast forming this characteristic fear of being ridiculed, or of being noticed. Even then my self-concept was so very low I did not really feel convinced that I was actually a "self" at all, but more a transparent something, or worse, a nothing; that nobody would notice me unless they were to ridicule me; so I preferred, of course, complete anonymity. (My mother never understood how I lost a perfectly good pair of black shoes and found a good pair of red ones in the same day. My first major lie!)

MY RELIGIOUS TRAINING

My parents were good, religious people. They gave me their share of goodness in the simple wisdom of their lives. I knew when my father was reading from the Bible, that the words he repeated were admonitions to *me, personally*, for my being lazy, selfish, light-minded, a liar, and all the things the Bible tells us not to be--if we are to be saved. I wasn't even sure I wanted to be saved while I was growing up, and I was even more sure I wouldn't be! My sins, of course, were not so monumental, or even *unusual*. Only in my vivid imagination did they deserve any real notice! I think now I rather relished the dreams I had of myself in hell, being badly punished for the dreadful and most heinous crime of nipping more than once, a cookie before dinner, which was forbidden, and which of course I did nightly--and *suffered* for, after the cookie was eaten! The guilt I felt was lovely!

I NEEDED A GOD

The poignant shadow of my childhood sometimes looms up to me in a melancholy sadness as I realize, in my role of mother and adult, that I must give more understanding than I had as a child myself, and certainly, more awareness and tolerance of the loneliness of all people to my daughters. We forget much too often to regard children as "people." What I

lacked, even then as a child, was a God--a God I *liked* and felt at home with--not a wrathful, spew-spitting God, but a gentle father, who wept with me in my anguish-filled moments and smiled on me with love and hope as He proved to me that *God is Love*, and that the giving of His Son was the real proof of His benevolence. As a child I did not know, nor could I give a name to, the silent hungry spots inside my heart and soul, but they grew more painfully vast and gaping as I grew into a woman. I could not love a God who scared His people, so I refused to think of Him at all, for in my heart I believed, if indeed this cruel portrait of God painted for one in my childhood were true, then I had only hatred and contempt for God! I would not give a monster like that the satisfaction of the sight of me genuflecting at His name, and uttering His hocus-pocus to Him, in words laced bitterly with my terror. I did not fear Him, for I would prefer Hell to living eternally in His cruel mercy. A heathen God, a cold, unforgiving, and surely unlaughing and unsinging diety was my childhood conjecture of my now beloved friend, God the Father, His Son, and my most precious ally, the Holy Ghost.

But I am getting ahead of my story, and the Godhead previously named will be explained simply in further reading of my story.

MY FAMILY OF MUSIC

I came from a family of five. We all loved music -- my two brothers, and sister, my parents, and myself -- but oh, how we used to argue! I was the "middle button" and I'm afraid I spent too much time unbuttoned, so far as my mouth went, than was probably good for me--physically, that is!

SINGING EXPERIENCES IN LOS ANGELES

The Willis & Johnson Quartette consisted of my brother, sister, cousin and myself.

We used to drive my poor mother crazy during our practices, which were about three nights a week. How she put up with us I don't know. As a quartette we sang at various outstanding churches in the Los Angeles Metropolitan area.

Gwendlyn Cooper, a pianist who was the accompanist for the late Mahalia Jackson, played for us for several years. She is an outstanding pianist and singer.

We sang at the Elks Auditorium in Los Angeles on many occasions. This is one of the larger halls in the city.

We also gave recitals for a well-known ladies' club in Los Angeles called the Wolfendale Ladies' Club. Among the songs we use to sing were the "*Creation Hymn*" by Rach Maninoff, "*Now the Day is Over*,"

and "*Unanswered Yet.*"

I sang alto in the quartette, which was fortunate, because I had asthma, which tends at times to make one's voice slightly low--especially when the disease is upon one *full force*, which it often was upon me! But nothing could keep me, the trooper, out of the lights! Miraculously, my insistence on singing helped rather than hindered my childhood asthma and soon, as I grew older, I found just breathing fantastically simple! My notes were, wonder of wonders, more than within an eight-count holding range for once!

Oh yes, I can remember singing for the Wisemen Civic League which my grandfather R.W. Willis was founder and president in 1932. There were at least 25,000 members (integrated) before the years of mass integration started, as was told to me by my father S. J. Willis Sr.

My sisters' group, "The Honey Cones" of Los Angeles, were also very popular among the young and old alike.

Going back to my childhood, I remember how my father always loved to sing, and arguments or no, my family survived, literally, many times on music! I remember my father singing one song in particular that I loved, as I sat in church listening to his solo. It was called "Alone." "Alone, alone, He bore it all alone," were words that comprised part of the lyrics. I would cry silently each time he sang it, with his magnificent voice and with all of his heart, because I,

the victim of a sensitive, searching, and imaginative nature, felt so often, and so acutely, and so strangely alone, too.

I was always a child in trouble. I realize now, my antics were attention-getters, because I needed so much to be reassured that somebody knew I was around and alive. I preferred punishment, I even liked it I think, sometimes, to being a "good little girl" in the isolated corner of some room of the world. As a result I took the blame at home for many things I had not done, but I tremble now as I admit I sometimes instigated undue punishment willingly on myself! Now I know I was a desperately frightened child, who needed badly to communicate with somebody, anybody, but I never did realize this need. I look at children now, mine and other people's, and as I search their eyes, where all of their feelings lie exposed at one time or another, I want to hug them close and breathe into them the sacred beauty of promise in the world, in the life we live, and in the God we all share. But I cannot give anyone this one special gift. It must be found alone, as I have found it -- through scars of searing hatred, through the plague of watery, unwanted pity from others, through the never faltering search for truth and hope despite the weight of lies and despair heaped sometimes daily upon everyone's back! Children, if they aren't fortunate to have the beauty of God in the faith of their parents' lives, parents who luckily and happily *do* help to pave the way

through their example of love, will find a peace too, someday, if their hunger is great enough. I know this is true, as much as I know and believe my own children are the children of one God, sent to me for a purpose and lent to me for love, just on trial, with eternity for the option.

I do not accuse my parents of embittering me toward God, for they loved God in their own way, even though I soon realized, as I grew to be a teenager, that their way could never be my own. My childhood, although probably quite typical of all American children's experiences, was shaded and troubled with a vague dissatisfaction and anger. I felt I was missing something, a something I could not name.

EVERYBODY LIKED ME - BUT ME

I was such a kooky kid . I would deliberately antagonize a teacher for attention, until his anger rose up, then I would manipulate a smile, and in an instant, that same teacher, was smiling too! *Everybody liked me, but me!* And so my life went on in meaningless overtures of gestures I now know were my own gropings for love, well hidden by my freaky, nutty, outgoing personality. I was the typical "life of the party;" that was me, all right, but I was always running, running, and I never found an escape nor a goal in all those years, and my frenzy and panic grew.

I was alone and very afraid most of the time. I would dream at night, before going to bed, of being a

missionary— I don't know why— but I knew I had *something* to do in life, that I must help to ease the ever-present, always growing torment of a searching heart. I felt that "something" I had missed might never be mine, but perhaps if I dedicated my life to the service and hopes of others, I might help someone else find fulfillment and that final part of himself I so badly needed. I kept telling myself, surely there are others more in need of something than I am, for I was provided for, and loved, and a member of a family, but I still always retreated to the darkness and sobs of an uncharted and unsoothed me.

I tried many times throughout my teen years to talk to God again, but still it was futile. I felt I had to keep my innermost secrets and thoughts from him, to escape His wrath and revenge, so my methods of prayer became a diabolical plotting to outsmart God! In order to bluff Him, so to speak, I tried to "con" Him into believing that I prayed for a "friend," who did things I had done and needed forgiveness and help; also, this "friend" thought and hoped and longed every day quite exactly the same as I did. But God would think I was naïve, I convinced myself, not crazy or bad, if that's the sign I got for my "friend's troubles," which was again a big fat nothing: obviously, my plan didn't work!

I now know that I wanted most to be accepted and acknowledged and assured of my place as an individual, but I was afraid there was no individual inside the outward me. I was *really* afraid there was no *real me*.

I've always enjoyed being around people; still, I have always felt intimidated among them, whatever their race, or anything else! I didn't believe a compliment about me when I heard it, and if someone told me I was really *good* at something, I refused from then on to either try to improve that something, or to perform around that person again. I was afraid the second time around I would be a failure in his eyes. Mine was a life that had set a pattern, a pattern which would need immense effort to remake and refurbish and rebuff!

CHAPTER 3

CHAPTER 3

MY SEARCH FOR TRUTH

A CHURCH "TOURIST"

By the time I was twenty-four years old, I had been in and out of so many churches at this point, I felt like a tourist in Italy. I was lonely, so I would drift into a church group which consisted of newly acquired friends or just one friend, but I would amble on soon, and as the friendships dwindled or dulled, so did the church I had been attending. I was sure at this age that all churches were relatively void of meaning for me, and I nearly lost all faith in finding my truth, so long locked up inside me! The old pattern of fear and running initially set in my childhood was gravely reinforced as each church became a symbol to me of rejection of me by those who belonged and believed. Never did I believe or even consider that I had rejected them and their hopeless church. I was probably more unhappy at this time than I ever dreamed possible.

Our old quartette had, of course, dissipated by this time, but still I would find solace in music, and sometimes by myself I would sing "*Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child*," with tears plopping onto my folded hands and tumbling down my nose and face in trembling signs of a cascade of my depression, loneliness, fatigue, and hopelessness. I was so young to be so alone! But I truly was, and there was no ready help for me. How can one help a sorrow and a pain that has no name, no name? No name - - -

FLIGHT INTO FANTASY

Then I turned to my looks and to my clothes for my identity and recognition! I had been called pretty, attractive, and even strikingly beautiful, but I could not believe this! I dressed myself "to the teeth" to use a cliché, because I vow every part of me *was* dressed, even my *teeth*, which sported a gold filling I liked to comment on if the conversation lagged. I shudder now when I think of the way I would swagger into a new church, to show off my latest outfit, my latest figure, and my latest hairdo! I was constantly changing and rearranging myself! I was so vain, it is a wonder somebody didn't throw me in a puddle, but I cannot recall anyone, surprisingly, being mean—just a little kindly quiet in a tired, patient way. Even my mother (who understood me more than I ever guessed) realized what she could and could not give me, i.e., myself back to me, so I had to find my way myself— or not at all, and I was floundering badly!

Fortunately, that period ended, but I chuckle softly now as I watch my own ten-year-old daughter mimic me, and parade around in my clothes, with badly applied make-up smudged on her prancing eye. She wears my wigs, and in her parody of me, I am reminded of my own, long-ago caricature of me *by myself*. I do not discourage my child from her play, but I pray that her young heart is not alone, and that her play is truly a childlike fancy and that is all.

One day I asked my daughter in rather a light vein

what she might like to be when she became an adult. She answered without hesitation, "I *have* to be a waitress or something like that, mommy!" I was struck by an impulse to deride her choice and her dogmatic approach to what her future must surely be, but I held back the words. If that was my child's dream of the moment, or of a lifetime, I did not want to be the one to shatter it for her. No job is too menial, I have decided, since if a person *wants* to do it and enjoys it as well, it is indeed an enviable state, for how many people of any race or religion can claim a real love of their daily work? I think the answer is far too few! I did not condone nor condemn my child's innocent dream, but let silence be the binding link of further communication between us, only because I was able to accept her goals as her right to achieve them, and not instigate my own fallen dreams on the life and mind of a child, with her own life to live, and her own right for individuality and finding herself. This might have been the "red letter day" in my life for finally recognizing love as it really is - or must be, and for sparking a flame of maturity in my own personality.

The flight into fantasy comes most easily to children, and it is right and good that fantasy helps children become integrated with reality, as the two are sifted out through the maturation of the child. Hopefully, an adult need no longer flee into fantasy but is able to incorporate reality as a necessary and quite acceptable part of his life. Until now, I had no conception of what reality even vaguely consisted of.

My life, as a sickly asthmatic child, and yes, as a minority group child, constituted deprivations of many scopes in all phases in what might be called an otherwise "tolerable" existence -- but tolerable only in the fact that I was allowed escape in my own fantasy world, where I might be anyone I chose, but I never did get around to choosing being myself! I would have been a most overt example of a day dream or a fantasy, for this was the world I lived in.

LACK OF ENCOURAGEMENT

The words spoken to me by my parents, meant only for my own good, I'm sure, now come echoing into my life as I recall those endless and interminable days spent as a bedridden child. The words, "You'll never be anything, you'll always be too sick for that!" I heard over and over throughout my asthmatic days as a child.

In my parents' simple and childlike love for me, they had forgotten, that encouragement against seemingly hopeless odds to a child or to anyone is far more therapeutic in the long run than discouragement. Despite their kind intent to shield a beloved child from the hurts of attempting a normal life, I struggled against the odds and I was finally well. However, this constant reminder that I should not attempt *anything* at all with my life, because of possible recurrence of my

illness, plagued my girlhood years and caused me to give up my dreams of being "somebody" someday. I dropped out of school. I had given in to the odds. Despite the bitter memory of my illness and the disruption of my education, I found solace in the fact, and I find it still, that despite the handicap of formal education, my life itself has been a unique and one-of-a-kind education. My experiences were individually responsible for what I am today. I still carry and ever present need for more education, through both more experiences in life, and through formal schooling as well. Luckily, I have always had an innate ability to verbalize well, and this has been a most effective tool in acquiring jobs and in just relating to people in general. I formulated early in life, and still carry on this formula in present day life, three important precepts: Encouragement, Understanding, and the great precept of Christianity--Love! I realize, of course, the first two are basic to the performance of love of any kind, and love is the word for all fine characteristics sought after and admired by human beings. Love is predicated on many things, but first loving the Lord, second loving your neighbor, (all of them!) and finally incorporating into one's life a genuine liking and even loving of oneself. This can be achieved only by learning to love God with a peaceful heart, and with an understanding and an appreciation of Him as a person and a friend, just as one understands a friend, and just as one loves a member of the family. This understanding

did not come upon me in just one blessed moment; rather, it snuggled close to my heart as my anxious arms reached out, figuratively waiting for the refuge of God.

LEARNING COMPASSION

When I once learned to care about others, when I once learned the meaning of compassion, when I once learned to forget about my own needs and think first of others, I stopped working words, doing deeds, and I began in a simple uncluttered way to find at last peace of mind. I have had life both ways, with and without peace of mind, and I never intend to relinquish this grand gift. I am an exuberant, happy, adult female member of the Mormon Church. This is my life and this is my peace.

I learned to love and to finally forgive my parents after I passed from childhood to an adult member of society. As I began to function and exist as a useful member of society at last, I saw how ridiculous it was to hold my parents accountable for the misery I had known, which I now see was probably most self-inflicted, than due to failure on their part. I now love my parents for what they are, and I understand that the bitterness and self rejection I felt as a child was a fantasy of my own, created and born by my own self-pity. My parents reared their children as they believed was good and right, and they sincerely tried in every way to make us happy, even at the risk of their own comfort.

Now as a mother myself, I really appreciate my mother's hesitance to enforce rules that were disobeyed, but she always did it anyway. With children of my own I realize it is easier to say yes than no, but the sacrifice of discipline on the part of a parent is only another act of love. At the times of my own punishment I truly felt my parents hated me, but I know now they were miserable in inflicting punishment on me even though deserved; I learned to hate the words, "It's for your own good."

If my Mom and Dad read this story I hope they will realize how deeply I appreciate all they have done for me. I hope they will forgive any agony or pain I have ever caused them. I love both my parents so very much.

A MOMENT OF LIGHT

In these next few pages, I am about to reveal with a natural and hesitating wariness, an experience so deeply personal in my life that I tremble when thinking of it; and my heart is stirred by the questions, paradoxically, as to how this vivid and very real experience of mine will be accepted and acted upon by the readers of this book. I can only say the experience is vital to my story, and it is most difficult to relate accurately because of its very personal nature but still, it must be told for complete understanding of the development of that complex person called "me!"

At the outset of my revelation of this moment in my life, I must say I do not fear ridicule nor disbelief from others; I do not hesitate to tell what happened to me because I fear others will scoff or smirk at my naiveté; what I do fear is that my ability to recount this very beautiful and very real episode in my life, will be called a "hallucination," or a very "real dream." It was none of these. It was really an occurrence that I would vow to my death I saw and heard while wide awake, and while fully in tune with all of my senses -- even so in tune that I was given the gift of perfect and total recall of the incident. I fear also that I am very inept and incapable of grasping those words that would tend to make this happening in my life what it truly was--a sacred, stunning and very wonderful revealing experience, which marked the beginning of a very definite turning point in my life.

It began, this "moment of light," as I refer to it now, on a very ordinary evening I had spent out in my usual, meaningless manner. My life at that time was one of true "lostness." As Thomas Wolfe says, "Oh, lost and by the world forgotten, ghost come home again." I always thought it very ironical that this phrase was so often repeated in all of Wolfe's works, yet one of his most famous novels was entitled and bore the theme, *"You Can't Go Home Again."* Of course this is exactly opposite of the major theme in his works, of the need for the spirit of all human beings to return home to that somewhere nestled in that elusive

someplace of childhood, or perhaps even further back. further back.

I was all grown up, I thought that night; I had been living alone for quite sometime, and I thought myself sophisticated. My rejection and ridicule of any substantial or tangible being called God cropped up in my conversation often, and I thought it very intelligent and witty. I shutter now recalling some of my rehearsed, pseudo-intellectual comments on the personality of God if He did exist. Surely he must be a psychotic sadist to envelop this world, His very own creation in such blatant and never-ending sorrow! I would have no association with any Deity of this kind, even though He were real, which I did not believe. The price of genuflecting to a malevolent and unkind monstrosity revolted me. How silly and sad and ridiculous I must have been. My adamant and fervent denials of God only showed more vividly the need I had for a God who was kind; and the kindness I sought I knew inately did exist in God, and I had known it all my life, despite my caustic and juvenile dribblings and uncandid remarks about Him.

I entered my apartment that night the image of a full-fledged, independent, and I thought very "with it" single girl. This was my self-portrait. Sadly, I was exactly the opposite of all these. I sighed that night as I prepared for bed, feeling the acute shallow and empty behavior patterns of my life thus far. They drifted groggily through my tired consciousness, causing me

sudden pangs of guilt that shattered through my soul and body, leaving me moist and trembling. Defiantly I strutted off to bed, with a stubborn and I thought remarkably casual look on my face, in order to counteract the silly and sophomoric fright my insides were at present struggling with.

I lay down in a prison of pillows and stifling bedcovers. I closed my eyes, but they flashed open again. Instantly, for reasons I cannot name, my mouth became extremely dry and I wet my lips fervently, after arising for a drink of water. Still the awful and empty black fear crawled persistently throughout my body. Finally I held my head in my hands, and cowered under my covers praying in meaningless, disjointed praises, begging for the terrible anxiety and horror that enveloped me to leave me in peace. I made wild promises to a God I thought was cruel, but I vowed sacrifices, swearing to abstain from many things I enjoyed if only he would be merciful and take this awful roaring from my ears, the terrible pounding from my head, and the panic of stabbing pains from my wrenching stomach.

Nothing happened for an instant to alleviate my agony, then I flung myself in despair across my bed and lifted my hand helplessly against the horrid massive presence of a silent suffocating stillness, that now had seiged my room. Even the outside street noises were inaudible.

I began to sob a prayer just as a child would, begging something somewhere for a kind God,

yearning to pray to a Father-In-Heaven, not a monster from Hell, to help me; "Dear God," I pleaded in tearful and convulsed spasms of sobs, "please, please, help me now in my most desperate hour of need."

A PEACE CAME

Then as suddenly as it had come this nightmare of reality ceased, and I was filled with a most gracious and quiet peace. I lay gratefully across my bed, now calmed in the serenity and sudden comforting stillness of the room. Then a voice spoke in the darkness, quietly, serenely, but with the most monumental majesty. It was a voice like none I ever heard or dared to imagine was possible. A very brief message was given me, as I felt a calming brush that might have been a hand on my damp and warm brow. The voice said, "*BE STILL, AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD.*"

My eyes fill even now with tears of joy and release through weeping at the wonder and recollection of that solemn voice. I shed tears because I know that it happened to me, and that will always be enough for me. If no one else can believe it really happened, that special moment of my life, I know that it did -- and I am so very glad!

Repentance, soul-searching, and a new life resulted for me from that warm night in Los Angeles, and I discovered what God was all about! I had found Him as a friend, and I had found a God like no other I

had ever been told of in any of the many churches I had visited in all of my life. Now my task seemed to be to find a church who knew God as I knew Him, one who shared with me the knowledge of life and that it is eternal. The promise that the death of Christ brought to mankind is a valid and realistic one, but there is so much more. In our today world of pragmatic and dogmatic dissensions and dissertations by seemingly very learned and respected men and women, who seem to *know* wisely that life is only life, and no one is "up there" caring one bit about what we insignificant mortals are about, I disagree! I heard a voice, and I know God lives! I am one of the lucky ones.

MY MARRIAGE

After spending a few years getting married and having two little girls, I still had had no success in my search for a religion that I felt comfortable and in accord with spiritually, socially, physically, and emotionally, too.

At this point in my life I moved to San Diego, California, because my husband was in the United States Navy, and I wanted to be with him as much as possible, not knowing what orders lay ahead for him. During this strange and again lonely, lost period of my life, I would sometimes gaze in uneasy guilt at my two young daughters, and I would whisper softly to myself as I looked into their large, trusting eyes, "Dear, God

in heaven, how can I lead these babies, how can I show them the truth and the right way of life, if I don't have it myself?" My husband never shared these tormented feelings of inadequacy with me as a parent himself, and the division that was one day to end our marriage, began to split open ever wider and ever more irreparable.

MY BIBLE CLASS

While we lived in Los Angeles, we took an apartment in a large apartment house, teeming with large families filled with children of all shapes and sizes. Perhaps because of the memories of my own isolated and lonely childhood, I have always adored children, and I have always initiated group activities with them from the time my own children were just babies, too small to join in. I have welcomed all neighborhood children into my home and heart. This trait in my personality was the reason, I'm certain, I decided to fill my long days spent in that city teaching a Bible Class to all willing children in the apartment building.

My Bible Class was held on Tuesdays and Thursdays. I had put a large sign on my apartment door saying, "BIBLE CLASS! COME ONE COME ALL! BE HERE AT THREE THIRTY SHARP OR MISS THE FUN!" However, despite what I believed was a very alluring sign, only four children appeared for class, two of them my own! Sensing a need to

arouse a little interest in the "young set" of my building, I held a quite unusual Bible Class that day. It consisted of making Noah's Ark, in the shape of sugar cookies! We all squealed in delight as the cookies arrived warm and fragrant from the oven; every animal I could get a cutter for was there, and we even managed a Noah out of a gingerbread cutout, which we all together refurbished to look properly biblical, kind, and worth saving from any flood!

Well, word did get around even from two mouths, not counting my own children, that attended that day .

Next time twelve eager students, or possibly prospective bakers appeared, fourteen including my girls. Hooray, I thought, I'm a sensation -- a real hit, a box office attraction! That day we began in earnest our Bible studies, but I'm very proud to say that the children never complained that they were dull, and after only a few requests, baking cookies was never asked for again. We had too much fun learning the simple version of that awesome and big book children have thrust, sometimes unwisely, at them -- The Bible!

The Bible class lasted the three or four months I stayed in Los Angeles, and it was the one really happy memory I can recollect of that period in my life. My marriage was going from bad to worse, and I realized a separation was imminent, although I tried very hard to make some real effort to save my marriage. It was no light matter for me and my self-image again was

delivered a very devastating blow. The last Sunday before I left the city, all twenty, for that was the size now of my Bible Class, of the children and their parents joined my daughters and myself on an outing. We had a really grand picnic that afternoon, and I shall always remember it, for although it was a farewell gathering, everyone "let their hair down," and almost all of the parents joined me and the children in baseball, hide and seek, kick the can, and a number of hilarious activities, that made the day one of greatest fun! As the day ended, we all said our goodbyes, but I managed to see each of my students for a special moment alone, and I said an individual goodbye to each of them before they went to their own homes. I cried a little, but they were tears of genuine happiness, because I had spent what might have been a totally desolate few months, doing at least one kind and worthwhile thing for young children. It made me feel very good! And I needed a little of that feeling.

SEARCHING FOR TRUTH

During my stay in Los Angeles, and after my return to San Diego, I continued my search for a comfortable faith, by visiting many denominations in the metropolitan areas. Always there were friendly people, and rude people, too, which is true of course whenever a group of people congregate for any reason. I knew this, and the rudeness of some did not bother me -- at least not very much.

I was always uneasy however, listening to the type of preacher who fervently predicted damnation for all in attendance, with no possibility of salvation for most of the world, along with a curse upon mankind from almighty God! I wanted to choke, sometimes, because I *did* try to relate to this fervent devotion, but my own secure and unshakeable faith in the existence of an ultimate kindness in God made it impossible for me to reconcile my point of view with any of the doctrine of the churches I visited--and I visited them more than once, in each of them hoping to find, if not on first trials, an answer or glimmer of identity with them after several frantic visits. It was futile, and to no avail. I, a deeply religious woman, was alone with no religion! It seemed a cruel irony, and a great deprivation to me; still, I could not force myself to pretend to believe doctrine that was against my own basic conception of the essential love that embodied Christianity itself. Never have I understood why so many people are religious only out of fear!

If I missed church on Sunday, any church so long as I was able to show my devotion and faithfulness to God, I was plagued by unreasonable and uncontrollable guilt feelings. Nevertheless, the effort on Sundays to get up and get dressed, and prepare myself for bewildered emptiness on the Sabbath Day, became finally a great and horrendous effort on my part. Sundays became a day I dreaded, for strangled disillusion or bitter guilt were my only choices. It was

about fifty-fifty for both of them, finally, as to which choice was made every Sunday!

I was working at a hospital at this time, and I loved it so much, for I felt here I truly aided the suffering, both physically and even surely emotionally at times by being cheerful and willing to help them, and most important, I think, by being genuinely concerned about each person with whom I came in contact. It was at this time, too, two major changes came to play in my life: My husband and I finally agreed to terminate our marriage, and I discovered I must have surgery.

The divorce proceedings were not so painful, I discovered sadly enough, as the pain of living together with bitterness and recriminations, which daily grew and festered like an open, uncared for sore, till the infectious hatred spilled out on not just our lives, but on our confused, frightened girls. The surgery, in contrast, *was* painful, but my recovery was a miracle of sorts. In fact, it was the answer to my long prayer for a faith I could pour my heart into. And so the stage was set for another plateau in my life; my conversion to the Mormon Church, and my departure as a married woman.

WHERE ONE DOOR A CLOSED
GOD OPEN A MOTHER

CHAPTER 4

MY CONVERSION

CHAPTER 4

MY CONVERSION

*WHERE ONE DOOR IS CLOSED
GOD OPENS ANOTHER*

After my surgery was completed, (a very minor operation on my legs) and after the hours required for all post-operative patients to spend in the recovery room, I was transferred to a double bed room, still woozy with anesthetic, and too sleepy to notice if my roommate looked like my "type," (in other words, what her skin color was.) I had been filled with apprehension before my operation, because I knew some white people violently objected to sharing the facilities of a room in a hospital ward with a colored person. In the weeks I had spent as an employee of this same hospital, I had had to handle many such situations in the most tactful manner I could manage without showing that an insult to my people was indirectly an insult to me, too. On one such occasion, an irate white patient scarcely bothered to notice my color in his or her clamor to get out of the room a Negro had been moved into, with the fair assumption that he or she had every right to the same privileges and comforts as anyone -- even superior-type white people.

Before I had gone into surgery, therefore, I had asked several of the nurses on surgery in the surgical wing (post) if they would help me out by seeing that the person I shared my room with was asked first if she objected to my color, and that she not be a smoker! I

was not priggish about my non-smoking code, but my asthmatic past was often more than a memory if I had to be around heavy smokers too long. It was certainly no reflection or assumption or lack of it on the part of anyone who smoked, for as yet I had not become a "Mormon," with the rule of abstinence from tobacco for all members for reasons of health.

When I awoke finally, enough to be interested in my companion for the next several days, I was greeted by a perfectly made, sterile, very empty hospital bed. Immediately I assumed the nurses had not been able to find even one person who would be willing to share a room with a "NEGRO!"

I fell into despair and self-pity and I said very little to my friends on the staff, leaving them baffled and somewhat bewildered as to what they had said or done to offend me and estrange me so. Little could I guess that my friends had arranged and saved through great length of deception, and a little "round about conning" of the supervisor, the room for a really darling gal now in surgery. The hours seemed long to me, but at the end of my first conscious day my new roommate, and soon to be cherished friend, arrived, groaning in the grips of anesthetic grayness on a stretcher to be laid gently next door to me in that very sterile and empty bed. I watched her intently as the nurses adjusted the I. V. bottle and needle into her veins, took another check on her vital signs and then left, to check again shortly on her. I couldn't wait for her to wake up and *talk* to me!

I rang my buzzer and a girl I knew well on the nursing staff whispered in, as only nurses can whisper while walking in a room. "Hi," she greeted me in her usual blonde and friendly manner. I asked her, full of cheer now, if she knew anything about the girl next to me. "Only that we all decided you'd like her better than a male tennis player that's coming up next," she grinned and hurried back to her duties, for I was almost an ambulatory patient at the time and she could see, because she was trained and professional, that all I wanted to do was chat, and she simply couldn't spare me the time!

Finally my neighbor came to and joined me in supper—she on a light, bland diet, me on a hearty roast beef! She roared playfully in envy, but the nurses told her she would fast lose solids if she tried eating for another twelve hours, despite her avid hunger pangs! I told her it was gas and to be quiet and she threw her piece of white, crustless bread at me, laughingly. We were friends on sight!

BARBARA WESTON

Her name was Barbara Weston, and one of the first things she told me next morning as she brushed her hair was that she was a devoted Mormon. I thought she meant something to do with her dietary habits, like a vegetarian or something, so I shrugged and said, "Me, I eat anything!" She really laughed at me and I

laughed along with her because her laugh was so infectious, but I still asked in a bewildered giggle, "What's funny?" "YOU," she replied, sighing and turning off her glee. "A Mormon is a religion, you cuckoo! I'm a member of the Mormon Church--you know, Salt Lake City--the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, alias also the L.D.S. Church! Surely you've heard of our President and Prophet David O. McKay!" She looked at me candidly with her penetrating blue eyes, and I turned away, feeling ashamed. Then I remembered something. Turning back to her, I cried, "Yeah, I knew a real flaky old lay in San Diego once who was a Mormon."

I looked at her apprehensively; "Hey, you're no fire-spouting fanatic or something are you?" She laughed her merry laugh again and said in her pleasant musical voice, "Do I act like I would be a fanatic? I'm what is regarded as an active and average member of my church and I really love it! It's my life as well as my husband's and children's, too. It gives us the ground rules to follow in leading a meaningful, happy life, with activity, spirituality, and a heck of a lot to live for now and for all eternity ! ! !"

I stared at her for several moments and I realized Babara Weston may well represent the answer to my long and sincere and searching supplications through prayer for a channel to express my faith. "Tell me," I pleaded, making myself comfortable on the pillows, "Tell me all about it, please!" And that was the

beginning of five days we shared talking into the latest hours of the night, every night, (we hid our sleeping pills under our pillows to stay awake) about the Mormon Church, its basic precepts, and what its tenants and promises were. There was something radiating from Barbara all through this period, something I could never name, and something I had never encountered before in anyone. It was I know now, complete happiness and accordance with life and God.

That certain something Barbara Weston had I later decided was a special sort of charisma; this gift seemed to attract people and certainly made getting to know her an almost irresistible quest. Although she seemed never to be giddy, she sparkled. There was a beauty that radiated from her and proved itself throughout our stay in the hospital, from extra favors from the kitchen help to an over-concerned doctor whose rounds to Barbara were tantamount to that elusive something called a housecall. She glowed in the mornings despite the humiliating and sometimes unbearable routine of hospital care. She was never too cheery, but in the afternoons she was like an electric blanket, comforting me to sleep and convincing me that there was a reason to like living. Barbara Weston was a unique and beautiful girl, and she was crucial to my life.

MY CONVERSION

When our hospital stay was up I bid a moist, truly regretful good-bye to my new and cherished friend. Thankfully our friendship has resisted the destruction of time, but it was through her encouragement that soon after my release I contacted a Bishop in regards to having lessons and learning more about the church that made Barbara Weston what she was.

The pay-off for my sessions seemed after a relatively short time to be almost like hitting the jackpot. I knew this gospel was true. In comparison to the other churches I had joined, the Mormon Church did not destroy and wear down hopes of salvation. Never was Sunday a scolding session in this religion. The Mormon Church always was to me and is still a renewal of strength, and through chiefly taking the Sacrament of blessed bread and water, I am able to again have courage to face the challenge of the covenants I had taken in the waters of baptism. Also through the gift of the Holy Ghost given to me after baptism my week was aided and I seemed to be able to better live in the fashion that left my heart and my conscience at rest.

Some of the things that impressed me the most about the Church was learning about the practice of the Mormons to have family home evenings with their families, where they study gospel teachings and have evenings of fun together. I was also attracted to their practice of family prayer. But the thing that really

converted me was reading the Joseph Smith Story in the hospital. It brought back to my memory my own very personal experience with the evil powers and praying within for deliverance and feeling the Lord's spirit of peace come over me. I didn't really want any lessons, but the Church leaders said that I had to have them in order to be baptized. So I asked if I could have them every night; but they calmed me down to one a week. I was baptized about two months after leaving the hospital.

I felt the Mormon Church had something to offer that no other church had to offer and that was authority to act for God. My heart and my mind was open to the lessons they gave me and I believed them. It was not hard for me to understand them.

While I was taking the lessons from the missionaries I was very excited about the Godhead lesson, learning about the three personages in the Godhead and about the special mission of the Holy Ghost to lead people to truth and help them in their lives. The Book of Mormon helped me to understand and accept my position as a black person much better. The Plan of Salvation lesson also helped me to understand things much better.

Since joining the Church I have learned alot more about prayer. All of my life I had been telling Heavenly Father what I wanted and had been guilty of telling him what to do. I have now learned that you should

first think out in your mind what you really want to do and then you should *ask* and patiently wait upon the Lord to give you your answer.

MY BAPTISM

About my baptism, I was immersed in water which is symbolic in our church of washing away all sins. After this moment the new member is given the gift of the Holy Ghost which is a Spirit and a Friend, a Comforter and a Guardian, and if one is in tune with this Holy Spirit, living the gospel seems to come almost naturally. *These two things, baptism and the Holy Ghost are the only requirements, contrary to popular belief, for entering the Celestial Kingdom and being with God for eternity if one is worthy.* Therefore, the Priesthood covenants of the Temple which we are not allowed at this point are not really so crucial as popular belief dictates.

Enough of theology. My life from the moment of my baptism, to state a gross understatement, was changed. I attended church faithfully, I restored a lost ego, I became a better mother, a better daughter, and I learned to truly love my neighbor.

CHAPTER 5

MY EXPERIENCES

IN

THE CHURCH

And now, my dear boy, I am going to tell you
the story of my life, and of the things I have
done, and of the things I have seen.

My name is James H. Harris, and I was
born in the year 1840, in the town of
Harris, in the State of New York.

My father was a farmer, and my mother
was a woman of many virtues, and of
many accomplishments.

My father was a man of many virtues,
and of many accomplishments, and of
many accomplishments.

My father was a man of many virtues,
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many accomplishments.

MY DESIRE ---- TO SING IN THE CHOIR

A new challenge presented itself as I began to dream of the possibility of becoming a member of the Tabernacle Choir. I knew I could sing, but I did not know whether or not I could sing well enough for this magnificent choir. During this time I was working for the Genealogical Society and despite most people's kindness, my race did present problems. Naturally I knew my race might be a handicap, especially because there were no Negroes in the Choir, nor were there any working with me at the Genealogical Society. My anxiety grew because despite many people's obvious over-kindness, I knew many people were uneasy about me. One day a lady came up to me and asked in the most sincere innocence, "Are you from the West Indies, Dear?" I said, "No, why?" "Well," she said, "Your skin and hair are of the West Indian type." I knew of course she wanted to know what nationality I was, for it was beyond her comprehension that a Mormon would be a Negro or vice versa. I told her in a quiet manner that I was a Negro. She said rather flustered, "Oh I'm so glad to see you working here, but are you a Mormon?" When I replied yes, she was close to collapse. Not a vicious woman, but a naïve one, she made it a point to go out of her way every morning and come to where I worked and say, "Oh hello there, good morning."

My experience on the job, I am sure, had a great influence in helping me to resist an attempt to audition.

Finally, I decided to try, but I had no idea I would have such problems getting in, not only did I have to be a Mormon I learned, but I had to get a recommend from the Bishop and Stake President. Certainly at this time my faith was being tested, for I became angry. Despite my attempts and my calls to get an audition, I could never get in touch with Professor Condie. I stopped trying for a few months and consoled myself with the fact that perhaps it just wasn't time.

I visited Los Angeles for a short time, and while I was there, I received a forwarded letter from Salt Lake City. Upon opening the letter I read that Brother Condie of the Tabernacle Choir was looking for me. I could not believe it. The letter informed me I must come immediately or I would be put on a very long waiting list. I drove straight through from Los Angeles to Salt Lake, never minding the fatigue, but only hoping that upon my arrival I would receive my audition and it would go well. At one time on the highway, a trucker pulled me over to warn me that I had been driving on the wrong side of the road. Realizing I was excessively tired, I made a supreme sacrifice and stopped at a Holiday Inn and slept for a short time. My two young daughters traveling with me were so marvelously good, I think back now and am amazed at their young understanding. I arrived in Salt Lake City on Tuesday afternoon, and my audition was arranged for Thursday at 4:00 P.M.

THE AUDITION

I was so frightened the day of my audition I could not eat; however, I did eat two lemons remembering my Mother used to tell me it helped the vocal cords--if it didn't, at least it gave me something to do while I waited for 4:00 P.M. to come.

When I walked in and met Brother Condie, he had a great and kind smile on his face. The idea that I was meeting the director of the Tabernacle Choir vanished as I sensed his warmth which can only be attributed to a man of genius who knows about fear.

He began the audition by playing some chords on the piano, wanting to see how high or how low my range was, but then he struck a chord I had never heard of and suddenly I could not sing. Kindly he told me I certainly had good tone quality, and then he asked me if I might just go up and down the scales for him. Curiously, this relaxed me and soon I was making the best of my gift of music. For forty-five minutes I sang, then Brother Condie stopped playing the piano and he said, "Well, you made it." He said it so casually I had to ask him to repeat what he had said. My only reply was, "Wow!" I was shaking so hard he took my trembling hand in his and said, "I hope you thank God very often for your marvelous voice."

The first time I sat in the Choir during one of the General Conference sessions, it was like a daydream. I

was looking down from a choir seat and not up from the audience. It seemed almost too good to be true. The Choir has meant more to me than anyone can ever imagine because as I stated before, music has been a way for me to express all the feelings I cannot sometimes verbalize.

MY EXPERIENCES IN THE MORMON TABERNACLE CHOIR

Since I have occupied a seat as a member of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, many exciting things have happened. The first night of Choir practice I had papers to sign and was taken on a tour of the Tabernacle. I remember one person approached me and said, "Sister Martin, we are very happy to have you with us. What shall I call you--Black, Negro, or colored?" I then said with a smile on my face and love in my heart, that they could call me anything as long as they spelled my name right! That was the end of that session.

I have traveled with the Choir for two years now. We usually travel by air. It takes about two airplanes to seat 375 people not including the authorities and TV men.

I went with the Choir to Charleston, North Carolina, in 1970. I hate to fly, because I get air sick. There is so much to look forward to on the tours. We have pillow fights, we sing, and we take the time to get acquainted with others in the Choir. I have been asked

over and over, "Wynetta, do you get paid for singing with the Tabernacle Choir?" The answer to that is that no one is paid for singing in the Choir. However, we are paid in many spiritual ways.

In 1971 during the summer, I went with the Choir to Louisville, Kentucky and Nashville, Tennessee. Naturally we traveled by air! We gave a concert the same day we arrived in Nashville, Tennessee. After the concert, we went swimming about 10:30 P.M. It was most refreshing. I stayed at the Holiday Inn, where three of us were rooming together. The next morning we got up and ate breakfast, packed and flew out of Nashville to Louisville, Kentucky. We ate dinner at Colonel Sanders' Restaurant, all 375 of us, so you can imagine how large his place was. His white mansion and headquarters were a few blocks away. Many of us were able to meet Colonel Sanders, and he is just like his pictures.

I also remember traveling with the Choir to Washington D.C. to sing for President Nixon in 1971, which turned out to be an overnight trip by plane. We sang in the rain for President Nixon the next evening, the purpose of which was to help Nixon turn on the big Christmas tree on Washington Square. What an experience! All of my life I dreamed of going to Constitutional Hall and visiting other historical places of interest. My dream came true. We also were able to tour the White House, which was a most outstanding experience.

MY PARENTS VISIT SALT LAKE

In August of 1968, my parents wanted to spend their vacation in Salt Lake City. I was very surprised even though I had previously told them how beautiful the city was and how I knew they would enjoy a visit. They decided to come by train. My girls and I could not sleep the night before they were to arrive. We were up early Saturday morning; the train was due to arrive at 7:00 A.M. and we were there well before it finally appeared. We greeted my parents with joy, took them home for breakfast, then went out for a sightseeing trip. Naturally the first place I wanted to go was the Temple Grounds. The Visitors Center I was certain would be impressive. Since their arrival they had not mentioned my conversion, and I wanted to tactfully set the stage for any discussion, questions, or confusion they might have regarding my church.

During the visit to the grounds a real milestone was made in the relationship between my parents and me. When we arrived their composed smiling seemed stiff and almost unbearably forced. I am sure they didn't want to be critical of me, but I know they were not aware of the real reasons and fine attributes the Church enticed me with; of course I wanted them to know my religion was a beautiful one. Their hesitance was, I am sure, in part due to the fact that we were apart,

that I was alone with no husband, and that their background was strictly Protestant. My mother talked lightly of my new couch and rug as we began the tour, refusing almost to listen to the guide. I took her by the arm and told her "I still badly need your love, Mother, but I want you to know about my church and why I joined it, and how very much it means to me."

She smiled vaguely and told me she liked my sweet small bedroom. This was of course her way of dodging what to her was a very difficult topic between us. Throughout the tour I noticed many times my Mother seemed deliberately to shut out all information offered. My Father, however, seemed most interested and impressed and asked many questions of the guide.

My Mother finally said, "My feet are tired, I want to sit down." We left her on a visitor's bench as my Father and I walked freely amidst the well-kept and most beautiful grounds of the Temple block. When we returned, to my abject amazement, my Mother was deep in conversation with one of the missionary-guides on the bench. For two hours we were unable to get her attention and encourage her to leave. However, my heart held the hope that she might in an objective conversation learn more about my reasons for conversion as well as learning about our church. The conversation certainly seemed engrossing; for both their heads were bent together in serious contemplative discussion. I discouraged my Father from interfering

and walked with him instead along the city blocks, checking back until my Mother finally got to her feet and shook the Elder's hand.

As we walked to the car she was silent, and somehow instinctively I knew I should not question her. That evening as Mother and I sat at the kitchen table after a long day of food, fun and sightseeing, she began to talk of her experience on that bench on the Temple Grounds.

"Wynetta, what the Mormons are and believe is a good way of life. I understand more of their plans and the simplicity that makes you attracted to this church, but I do not know if there is room for our people. I am still not sure you aren't deluding yourself."

For a moment I was surprised into silence, then I quietly replied, "Mother, I became a member of the Church with the full blessings of baptism given to every member along with the gift of the Holy Ghost, this is all that is required, as far as we believe, to be with God eternally. Never once, Mother, have I felt I had no place." I continued with a deep sigh mustering up courage, "I have been so enveloped in activity and so very permeated by the good will of almost everyone I have encountered that I have been too busy to worry about whether I had a place. Doesn't that answer your question?"

My Mother looked deeply into my eyes, and taking my hand said, "I was very impressed with the sincerity of the young man I talked with; however, his

answers as to where our place is seemed not to come from the deepest conviction in himself that it was right or even that he understood."

"Oh, Mother," I pleaded, "In my deepest heart, that a place was waiting for me with you is my first wish; and when I joined the Church there was never a question that my place was ready."

My Mother looked seriously at me and said, "I promise you, darling, I will never call your church weird again, but I will not humor you by saying that I believe it is true. If they are taking advantage of your race, making you a mockery, it is my prayer you will know it and become wiser in decisions that should be given extensive thought."

"Mother," I said, "It is up to me to take advantage of the Church. I do not ask you to believe what I believe, but I ask you to respect what I believe."

My Mother was not a verbal woman and she had never talked to me with such emotion and such a display of the depth of her love for me. It was more often like her to scold when an occasion arose for displaying love or concern. So this moment together in my kitchen, with we two alone, has been one of the most lovely memories, and strangely enough, one of the most mind-easing moments of my life too.

My parent's visit ended too soon, and throughout the rest of their stay they had shown no real interest in my faith, and as they left, I knew by a tranquil affinity between us as we kissed good-bye, that I had their

blessings and their prayers for what I had done. Perhaps if I dare believe it, I had won possibly their admiration too.

B.Y.U. EXPERIENCE

In 1970 I had the opportunity to become the first black faculty staff member at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. I took advantage of this chance to do something for humanity. I was hired at B.Y.U. as a "Research Consultant on Black Culture." I taught the nurses in the Smith Family Living College, because many of the girls have never talked with anyone of the Black Race and to become a good nurse one must know different cultures. My first class was very exciting. I wasn't nervous, but I felt the tension among the students--not the tension of hatred for me, but rather they didn't know how to approach me on questions. I felt fear and doubt among them, and I know some of them had an inferiority complex. So I started out by telling them about myself and explained to them the importance of knowing a little about all races. Naturally nurses will come in contact with Blacks while giving care to the bedridden patients. Then I said that in order for them to understand the beginning of White superiority and Black-assumed inferiority, they must go back to the discovery of America.

Boy, did the eyes light up! I lectured to them for about forty-five minutes on the first Black men in the New World. I went on to say that these Black men came with the Spanish expeditions, not to work but to explore.

I'm sure many of those student nurses wondered what this had to do with nursing. I said a lot. Every culture has its disadvantages, every culture has a personality, and I finally stated to them that every man searches and dreams of something in his life. After my lecture, there were many questions asked of me, and I tried my best to answer most of them.

Another experience came at B.Y.U. when I gave a lecture for a graduating class of nurses. There were about twenty girls plus their male advisors. One individual expressed at one time she knew a Black girl and was very pleased with her friendship. Another told me this: "Mrs. Martin, I was born in the South and I am prejudiced, but I don't dislike you." She was so sincere and meant well. I told her that many things were instilled into her mind as a child while growing up in the deep South, where Blacks cannot defend themselves and where they are barred from restaurants etc. I said to her that I didn't think she was prejudiced, and she felt good about my saying this. But as we all know by now, we all have some "hang-ups" once in a while.

A few months later, I received an invitation to the B.Y.U. staff Ball. My, was I excited! I was probably the

first Black person to attend one of these balls. I had a marvelous time. I wore a long pink gown and danced with the young men who were there.

Dinner was served and what delicious food! I enjoyed every bit of what was served. I can remember a Black man who attended B.Y.U., who was one of the waiters. I had a chance to talk with him and found out that he was a very intelligent person in his early twenties, in his second year of schooling I believe. I could have talked with him all night, but he was too busy being a waiter. Up to this moment I have met at least four Blacks who have attended B.Y.U., and I must say that members of any race, color, or creed are eligible to attend B.Y.U. as long as they meet the general qualifications and are capable of handling the courses. No race is barred from B.Y.U., and I'm here as a material witness.

EXPERIENCES IN L.D.S. CHURCH

I have had many speaking and singing engagements since 1967 in Utah. In less than six years I have spoken in more than one hundred Sacrament meetings and very close to a hundred firesides, in addition to many seminary classes.

The general reception I have received has been amazingly great. So many members have welcomed me with open arms, and I don't find the general prejudice that so many think there is in the Mormon Church.

I can remember one fireside in 1969, during which someone asked me if I would change my skin to white if I had the chance. My, it's a good thing when one is led by the spirit, because I was not confronted by this type of question before.

With a smile on my face I said that Mr. Clean, Ajax, and Comet serve the purpose for many things. I don't care how much I rubbed with those chemicals, nothing would take my built-in tan away. I then said NO, I would not change my color from black to white because it wasn't meant to be. Each race should be proud of their color. One thing sure, I have the advantage, since I don't have to sit in the sun all day to get a tan. I have a built-in tan which cannot be removed unless our Father in Heaven takes a part in the transformation.

Many times I am asked if my own race gives me trouble for being a Mormon. My answer is that I have not been given any trouble by my own race. They will often ask me why I would join a church they think is prejudiced. My answer to them is that the Gospel is not prejudiced and I have met very few people in the Church which show any prejudice. There will always be some. No matter what church one attends or what race, creed or nationality we deal with, we will find good and bad people. We must not pin point one race or one religious group as being prejudiced, or we are paradoxically "prejudiced" in so doing. I hope that I can remove any prejudice that may exist anywhere I go for my race or my church.

My conversion to the Mormon Church has taught me, strangely enough, a greater tolerance for racial disputes than I ever thought possible. I am learning an unkind word whispered about me and my race, especially when I am within close distance, or even a remark made by a tactless, thoughtless person, leads me to more understanding that all people basically mean well, but fear and ignorance prompts many verbal remarks that I am sure are not intended to be painful. I have learned that a word is just a word and that deeds are more important than words. For deeds essentially lead men to words they speak. I do not cry anymore over insults, I cry only over insults I give. If a person has been purposely unkind, I hope for them only serenity in finding God and learning to live life filled to the brim with kindness.

More important in my own life I have knocked that piece of lumber off my shoulder, and I have even learned to like myself. This was no easy task, it was accomplished only through heartache, effort and searching until I found a church to give my life meaning. My childhood did shape me, but I feel no bitterness because of things I was denied. I am glad for a girl named Barbara who shared a hospital room with me, but more than that, a way of life. I could never repay her or thank her enough. I remember and I am grateful for the moment of my conversion, and again for the miraculous moment of my baptism followed by the gift of the Holy Ghost. I am grateful for the fact

that my first daughter has been baptized also. I remember a fight of my own, a struggle for a dream, and the final realization of that dream as I sit now in the Tabernacle Choir as a member. As I sing, I sing with all parts of myself to show the great gladness I feel for my life.

I look forward now to the future, and I hold close to my cherished memories of the past, and I wait for the time, as there is a time for all things, when my family will be given the blessing of the Priesthood in our home. When it is time, God will know it, and that will be the right time. Still, it is difficult for me to imagine how I could possibly be more filled with happiness and how my life could be more saturated with blessings than it is at the present. I am so very glad that *I AM A BLACK MORMON.*

THE ANSWER

*While sitting in my yard one day
Feeling depressed and low
A voice from the clouds spoke to me
And said, Your God he knows*

*I know your every burden and need
I count your blessings each day
If you would only put your trust in me
I'd cast your burdens away*

*I took the burdens to the Lord
And thanked him for his love
I thank my God for sending me
His voice from the heavens above*

WYNETTA WILLIS MARTIN

(PSALMS 24:4-9)

He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.



Choir Member Not Bitten On Mormon Restriction

By Steve Underwood

A Member of The Star's Staff

As a child Wynetta Willis loved to sit by a radio in her Los Angeles home and thrill to the sounds of the magnificent Mormon Tabernacle Choir coming over the airwaves from Salt Lake City.

She imagined herself a member of the choir and told her mother of her daydreaming.

"You say the silliest things," she remembers her mother telling her.

Today, the child grown to womanhood, Mrs. Wynetta Clark, 32-year-old mother of two daughters, is a contralto in the 375-member choir—the first black person to win a place in the choir.

But her journey to that role was marked by many detours, and, in the end, her decision to go to Salt Lake City was prompted not by personal desire, but by the counsel of a spiritual leader.

Mrs. Clark had joined and later dropped out of several religious faiths before she joined the Mormon church while living in San Diego. She was the first member of her race to be



In the Choir

Mrs. Wynetta Clark is the first black person to sing with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. She feels no bit-

because Negroes cannot hold the priesthood, but that's the least of my worries," she said. "Negroes are going to get to Heaven just like anybody else. It doesn't make any difference what you are. The church is within you."

She worries more that people might think wrongly of Mormon church members because of the theological distinction. Many within the church, she said, are eagerly hoping for the day that the distinction will end. White Mormons in Utah have treated her equally and warmly, she said.

"I wish I could open up my arms and hug everybody in Utah," Mrs. Clark said. "This is the church for me. I'm very happy in it, and I've learned how to get peace of mind."

After joining the Mormon church in San Diego in 1967, Mrs. Clark traveled around the state, giving talks on why she joined the church. She later was advised by the leader of the church in California to go to Salt Lake City. "He said I had a mission to teach

to a more membership church, Mrs. fact that the Negro families Lake City ar

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Daily Universe (BYU Paper)

Wynetta Martin joins BYU faculty

Conversion to the LDS Church, membership in the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, and now, "after two years of playing," affiliation with the BYU faculty is the recent history of Mrs. Wynetta Martin. Mrs. Martin will be joining the College of Nursing next week on a part-time basis to teach student nurses. Also, scheduled events become to o.

Living with her family in Ogden, Mrs. Martin expects to visit the campus about once a week to conduct about three classes per visit. Another big event in Mrs. Martin's life will be the year's publication of her book, "The Negro Mormon," the daughter of the member of the singing contralto Mrs. M.

KANSAS CITY CALL (Black Newspaper June 1971) Black Member Of Mormon Tabernacle Choir Visits Here

In an interview held last Wednesday, Mrs. Wynetta Clark of Salt Lake City, Utah, commented "As soon as we start accepting each other as individuals and not by the color of the skin, this will become a better world."

This and similar remarks were generated in a discussion in which Mrs. Clark discussed her role in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Mrs. Clark is the first black member of the world renowned Mormon Tabernacle choir, and as such, she challenges the commonly held belief that the Mormon church is racist.

The 375-voice choir was all white until 19 months ago when Mrs. Clark became a member. Presently, there are two blacks in the choir. The other young lady is a member of the soprano section, while Mrs. Clark belongs to the contralto section. The lack of black male voices is undesirable to Mrs. Clark, not because they cannot join the choir but because no black men have sought to join the group.

The disparaging amount of blacks in the choir is indicative of the comparatively small number of blacks in the Mormon church itself. Only 12 black families in Salt Lake City are members of the church. Mrs. Clark pointed out that many blacks believe that the church is racist and that this widely held belief has severely hampered any attempts of the church to attract black members. When about the attitude towards the church, Mrs.



WYNETTA CLARK

on God's earth.

Mrs. Clark is a remarkable woman in more than one sense. Along with being the first black member of the Mormon Tabernacle choir, she is a member of the faculty at Brigham Young university, where she was also the first black member of the staff. The university has often been cited, as a racist institution, primarily because it is sponsored by the Mormon church. Mrs. Clark is hopeful that the ignorance which has spawned the general feelings of ill-will towards the church and among members of the black community will be overcome. Mrs. Clark believes that if people would only take the time to discover the truth for themselves, they would see that the church is not prejudiced, nor is it racist. There are currently 20 black

students at Brigham university. Five can blacks and can students. Most students, also white students to make Mr culture cours popular clas

The phone is currently visiting with Dorothy L. She is also two girls, Paulette, was re-



Wynetta Martin

First Negro in Choir Accepts Post at BYU

An Ogden woman, believed to be the first Negro member of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, has been appointed a research consultant on black culture for Brigham Young University.

Mrs. Elmer (Wynetta) Clark of 2651 Adams, a registered nurse, has announced she has completed a book, "I Am a Negro Mormon," to be published soon.



MRS. ELMER CLARK

The 32-year-old woman was baptized into the LDS Church four years ago, the first Negro member in her ward in San Diego, Calif.

She and her husband, a Hill Air Force Base worker, moved to Ogden six months ago with their two daughters, one 10 years old who has been baptized, and the other 5.

Mr. Clark is a member of the Church of Christ. Mrs. Clark's parents are Methodists.

NOT PREJUDICED

She said she wrote her book because she wanted people "to know how I feel about the church—that it is not prejudiced."

"I want people to accept me as I am. My desire is not necessarily to convert but to contribute to others an understanding of the LDS faith."

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Clark says. "I
her husband, I
feel that the
LDS church is
not prejudiced
at all."

Negro singer joins LDS Church, pens book

GODDESS — "He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who shall not see the eyes of the Lord, he shall be made perfect."

Edglin J. Butler, director of the church's relations in places in the lecture book in 1960 in the her book in conversion in containing the past year, she 10 writing a dis- recognition of the Simon Chao, her daughter, 5, was born in has two sons, who are church and her husband Mormon and he and she are plan- ning to have a Clark says. "I her husband, I feel that the LDS church is not prejudiced at all."



Wynetta Clark, LDS member

Eagle Review-Advertiser

WHY CAN'T
THE NEGRO HOLD
THE PRIESTHOOD

By John D. Hawkes

Post Office in Charge
Accepts Post at BYU

WANT
THE NEW
THE PRESTIGE

By John D. Hansen

Note: The author is not a General Authority and therefore cannot act as an official spokesman for the Church, but he hopes that his ideas will be helpful in bringing understanding to the reader. This writing is not meant to cover every detail of the subject but only to act as a simple answer that might be given in a discussion with some non-Mormon friends.

As Mormons we are often asked: "*Why can't the Negro hold the Priesthood in your church? Are you prejudiced against them?*" No! I do not consider myself prejudiced nor my church! To understand the reason completely, one really needs to have a short series of missionary lessons to understand our doctrine. However, The writer will attempt to answer the question briefly and hope that the reader will be motivated to search further into our teachings at a later date.

To understand the reasons why the Negro isn't allowed the Priesthood leads us directly into the heart of three very beautiful beliefs and teachings in our church:

1st: We believe we are led by Prophets of God who receive revelation.

2nd: We believe we had a pre-existent state with God that had a great influence on our positions in this life.

3rd: We believe that God has a chosen people and rewards righteousness.

*First Teaching:**CHURCH LED BY PROPHETS & REVELATION*

So many people who don't know much about our teachings feel that our position with the Negro and the Priesthood is just something made up by individual members of the church or by certain church leaders who are personally prejudiced. In so many churches, the teachings, practices, and even beliefs are chosen by popular vote of the congregations. Even the leaders are often voted in by popular vote. This is not the practice in our church. We believe that God has called prophets to lead our church and we believe that they receive revelations in leading the church. We believe the first prophet was Joseph Smith, who actually saw God and who later received many revelations from God in directing the Church. It was Joseph Smith who first taught that the Negro could be baptized but not receive the Priesthood. The prophets who followed Joseph Smith have reaffirmed that it is still the will of the Lord that the Negro should not be given the priesthood.

The teaching of "prophets" is a most beautiful teaching. In the Christian world today there are so many conflicting doctrines on how to live and even about what one must do to obtain salvation in the Kingdom of God. All of their doctrines cannot be right. The honest seeker of truth is often left in confusion as to what they should believe and how they should live. What is needed is a Prophet of God to declare to us the mind and will of God.

Nearly everyone would love to have a prophet upon the earth, but as in all times of the Bible, they would be quick to reject the teachings that don't suit them. Even so today, there are many who do not believe in our prophets, and that is their sacred privilege! And if a black person does not wish to believe in our prophets, they certainly wouldn't want to be members of our church, and are therefore not missing anything by not receiving the Priesthood. A mature black person who decides to join the Church accepts our prophets and also accepts their position in regards to the Priesthood. If they choose to accept their position, why should the rest of the world question their faith?

Second Teaching:

THE PRE-EXISTENCE OF MANKIND

If one will accept that we have prophets in our church, there is really no need to discuss the issue further. However, many have not come to that knowledge yet. There are many who are committed to the concept that men are created equal. About the only way men are really created equal is that they should have equal rights of freedom in a free land. But every one is born with different attributes and abilities. There has never been two individuals born that are identical in every way. Everyone has different intellectual, physical and spiritual capacities. We are all endowed with so many different attributes and abilities. We are

all born unequal to each other. Everyone is our superior in some small way. There have been many wise men who have questioned the reality of God simply because they felt a just God would not make men so unequal, and yet everywhere they look they see great inequality among men right from birth.

There is no way to make God just and fair in looking at this life alone. To understand the justice of God and the total inequality of men, we must look beyond this life into a pre-existent state. The Prophet Joseph Smith received several revelations concerning our pre-existence as spirits of our Father in Heaven. Even as many excel in this life, we believe that many spirits excelled beyond others in the earlier state of our pre-existence. We believe that both our Savior and Satan had excelled, obtaining very high positions in the Spirit World. When it came time to receive our physical bodies there was a grand council called in the heavens and plans were presented. Satan's plan was to force all men into righteousness. Christ's plan was to give men their free agency. There was a war in Heaven and one-third of the hosts of Heaven were cast out with Satan--never to receive the opportunity of obtaining physical bodies. All those born into this life accepted the plan of our Savior. And it is the author's belief that we all accepted the conditions under which we would be born, black or brown, white or yellow. It is highly possible that we may have known all of the limitations and advantages we might have. We may have known

whether we would be blind or crippled, whether we would be born in the jungles of Africa or into rich families in America.

Whatever our limitations might have been we accepted them and rejoiced at the opportunity to come to earth and obtain bodies. We literally "sang" for joy. Some black people are endowed with great deal of intelligence, some with great abilities and skills. We may be born unequal to them in many aspects. Why should this be? Simply because they must have excelled in the Pre-existence in those areas and a just God has rewarded them accordingly in this life. However, the same goes for a person born with a black skin. It is obvious that God knows about it and that there must be some reason for it. Whether you consider it an advantage or a disadvantage, there is still a reason for all things--and those reasons obviously take us back into the Pre-existence again.

In that grand council called in the Pre-existent state there were many noble spirits present, and some of these spirits were called and foreordained to take important assignments in God's Kingdom upon the earth. Some were called to be prophets. (These were men who were worthy highly before God to be called prophets.) However, God was not prejudiced because he didn't call all men to be prophets! He called others to be Bishops, Elders, and Priests etc. However, God was not prejudiced because he didn't call all men to be Bishops etc. Those called to hold positions of

responsibility in God's church were to be given what was called the "Priesthood of God." There were some spirits present who had not qualified themselves to receive this priesthood and these are our Black brothers, and they were so marked to help us identify them here upon this earth. What they did or didn't do in the Spirit World is not told to us, and it is therefore evidently not important for us to know now. Many of them have obviously excelled and qualified themselves to be great spirits in many other ways and the justice of God will not hold them back in those areas that they have qualified themselves, but that does not include holding the Priesthood in the Restored Church of Jesus Christ!

Some people are indignant with our position and say we have no right to deny them the Priesthood. But in reality the reverse is true, we have no right to give them the Priesthood. It is God's Priesthood and not ours. We testify to the world that we did not create the Priesthood as they do in other churches today; but we bare witness that God sent heavenly messengers back to the earth and had them personally restore the Priesthood to Joseph Smith and his companion. And this priesthood was to be given only to those who were highly qualified to receive it. As a result there are many men in our church of all colors who never receive the Priesthood. But the justice of God in denying the Negro the Priesthood is answerable by the Pre-existence.

I had a friend who related to a Negro the explanation of the Pre-existence in regards to the black skin and the denial of the Priesthood. When he was finished the Negro stated that he believed in God and believed that there are reasons for all things. He said he had always wondered why he was black and had never heard of an answer more logical than this one.

Third Teaching:

GOD DOES HAVE CHOSEN GROUPS

However, there are still those who would question our doctrine and say that it doesn't sound logical because God never chooses special groups above others. But the fact is that God has always chosen certain groups above others. The Bible is one continuous testimony of how God has blessed the righteous and has allowed the wicked to bring upon themselves their own curses. How does God bless the most righteous of men? He blesses them through their posterities. Adam was one of the great and noble spirits that was blessed to be the father of all living and thus blessed with the posterity of the earth. His eldest son Abel was to receive the choice blessings of Adam and Cain desired that birthright and felt that if he killed Abel he might obtain that birthright. But when he committed that first murder, the Lord cursed him and placed a mark upon him. Instead of blessing his posterity, he cursed his posterity with the skin of blackness.

And thus was created a natural posterity and lineage for all the spirit children of God to come through that were to be denied the Priesthood of God.

Later on in the Bible there was a most righteous and worthy prophet by the name of Abraham. Because of his righteousness in the Pre-existent state and in his life here, Abraham was blessed of the Lord that through him and his posterity all nations of the earth would be blessed. And thus through Abraham, Issac and Jacob evolved the children of Israel, or the highly chosen people of God. It was known as the House of Israel and God blessed them greatly and blessed their posterity to be the Priesthood holders. Those spirits which had been most worthy in the Spirit World were to be born through their lineage. Joseph received the birthright of all of the twelve sons of Jacob and was to be even more blessed of the Lord, and his posterity was to receive the choicest blessings of the Lord. Judah was another son that received some very special blessings for his posterity, that through his seed would come the kings and eventually the Prince of Peace, or the Christ. (Gen. 49; Deut. 33)

Now with the above we actually have three divisions in the human race:

1. *Negroid Race*--descendants from Cain
2. *House of Israel*--descendants from Abraham
3. *Gentiles*--Those not descendants of Cain or Abraham

Anyone who is at all familiar with the Old Testament Story of the Bible is fully aware of how important it was to be of the House of Israel. They were commanded not to marry out of Israel. Many might call these practices prejudiced, but really they were the commands of God.

There were periods of history when the children of Israel were so wicked that the Priesthood was not upon the earth for men to hold except by the prophets. Was God prejudiced? The vast majority of the earth has never been given the opportunity of the Priesthood. And even during much of the history of Israel the Priesthood was denied to all the tribes but those who were Levites. Was God prejudiced?

When Christ came to the earth, he came only to teach the House of Israel and none other. In fact at one time a woman came to Christ and begged that he might have mercy on her daughter, but he ignored her. His disciples asked him to send her away and he responded that he was only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. She continued to worship him and finally he spoke rather rudely to her saying: It was not right "to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs." She answered: "Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." Then the Savior commended her for the saying and her daughter was healed. (Matt. 15:22-28) But the

point of this little story is that God still had a chosen people and Christ's mission to the earth was only to teach Israel.

By the standards of some people's definition of "prejudice," the Savior was very prejudiced in his approach. But if indeed the Savior was unjust and prejudiced here, then please call the author prejudiced also and may the whole world turn to prejudice in emulating the only perfect man to live upon the earth. Christ was sent by his Father to teach only the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He later sent his apostles out to preach only to the Jews or Israel in the first part of their administration. Some time after his resurrection, when the time was right he instructed Peter to start teaching the Gentiles beginning with Cornelius in Acts 10. But there is a time and season for all things, and the time and season is determined by God through his prophets.

It is also part of our teachings concerning the Negro that the time will come when the Negro will be given the Priesthood. But God will determine when that time is right.

Some feel we must be prejudiced simply because of the color of the skin. To illustrate how this is not the case, it may be interesting for many to know that large numbers of those in the south sea islands have joined the Church. Most of them are brown, but some are as black as they can be--but they are allowed to hold the Priesthood. The reason for this is, the Prophets have declared that they are not Negroid and are not of

the lineage of Cain. Now if the Church was prejudiced against a black skin these south seas individuals would never have been ordained into the Priesthood.

While the author was in Australia, he had a most delightful experience in teaching and baptizing a black Australian aborigine girl. She was a most delightful personality.

There are a lot of members in the Mormon Church and it is very likely that some have been guilty of prejudice against the Negro. However, these would be acts of individuals and not the church as a whole. On the other hand there are over-whelming examples of where individuals and organized church groups have shown acceptance and interest in the Negro Race. Right from the early history of our church until the present there have been Negro's joining our church. The author's wife traces her genealogy back to the early days of the Church. In one of her connecting lines there is a beautiful story written and preserved that tells of a Negro slave that had been badly beaten. To prevent further beatings, a kind man purchased him. This kind man later joined the Church, and before he died he instructed the slave to look after his daughter. This Negro slave saved the life of the girl one night when the Mormons were being mobbed. The home of her neighbor was burned and they were all killed. The Negro helped build the Mormon Nauvoo Temple and was one of three Negroes that came west with Brigham Young. He was given land to farm and call his own.

Long before it was the popular thing to promote, Joseph Smith had taught that slavery should cease and while he was a candidate for President of the United States he proposed that they free the slaves by paying the slave holders for them through the sale of public lands. The Prophet had Negro servants and friends who were devoted to him, recognizing in him a champion of their race and rights. One of the major causes of the Saints being driven by mobs from the state of Missouri was an article published in their paper that alluded to the abolishment of slavery. Missouri was a slave state and began to drive the Mormons out of their homes immediately after this article was published. The Mormons received some persecution simply because they allowed the Negroes to become members of their church. In view of these things it is amusing that Mormons are now thought by some to be prejudiced.

It has never been talked about a great deal since it happened, but just a few years ago the author was in on a fund-raising drive to raise money to build a church for Black citizens in our community. It involved a large number of Mormon congregations throughout Salt Lake. If we were truly prejudiced and had a hatred for the Black people, we certainly wouldn't have promoted this fund-raising, nor would we allow them any membership in the Church. The total percentage of Negroes in the Mormon Church is very small, but non-the-less there are a number. Their existence and

continued activity in the Church is non-refutable evidence that they have found happiness and the absence of the "intolerable prejudice" that the Church is falsely accused of demonstrating. The statement and experiences of Wynetta Martin in her writing is further evidence that there are some Negroes who have found happiness in the Church.

The author is prayerful that what you have read here in this writing will stimulate you find the complete answers to your pre-existence, why you are here and where you will go after this life.

HELPFUL SCRIPTURES AND REFERENCES
RELATING TO THE NEGRO
AND THE PRIESTHOOD

Scripture:

Gen. 4:15; 9:25-27; 10:15-20,32

Deut. 32:7-8

Rev. 12:3-9

II Nephi 26:32-33

D&C 29:36-41

Moses 5:16-41; 7:8-22

Abraham 1:20-27

History of the Church V:217; VI:205

(Where Brigham Young described when the Negro
would one day possess the Priesthood)---

Journal of Discourses II:272

Joseph Fielding Smith's Writings:

Answers to Gospel Questions Vol. I:138; Vol.

II:175-178; Vol. IV:169-172; Vol. V:162-164

The Way to Perfection Chapters 15 & 16

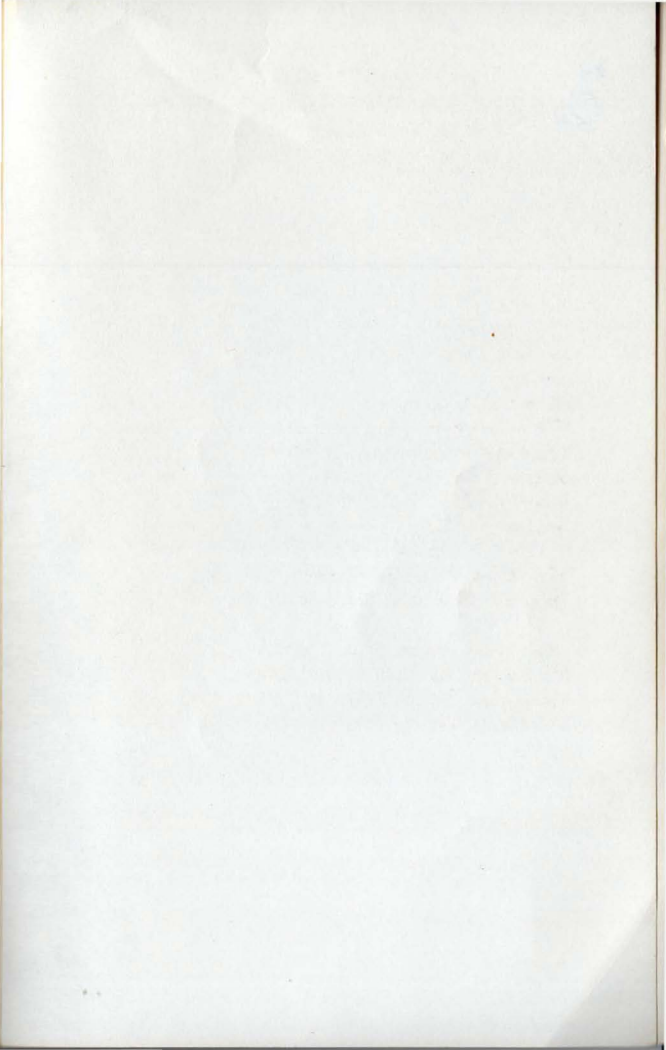
Doctrines of Salvation Vol. I:61, 65-66; Vol. II:55

Other books written on the Negro:

It's You and Me Lord! Alan Cherry

Mormonism and the Negro by John J. Stewart

The Church and the Negro by John Lund



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SCRIPTURES AND TOPICS
RELATING TO THE METHOD
AND THE PRACTICE

Scriptures

Gen. 4:17, 22-23, 26:12-28:12

Deut. 32:1-4

Rev. 12:1-5

II Kings 24:1-23

Isa. 24:1-25

Isa. 24:1-25

Isa. 24:1-25

Isa. 24:1-25

Isa. 24:1-25

Isa. 24:1-25

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Isa. 24:1-25

Isa. 24:1-25

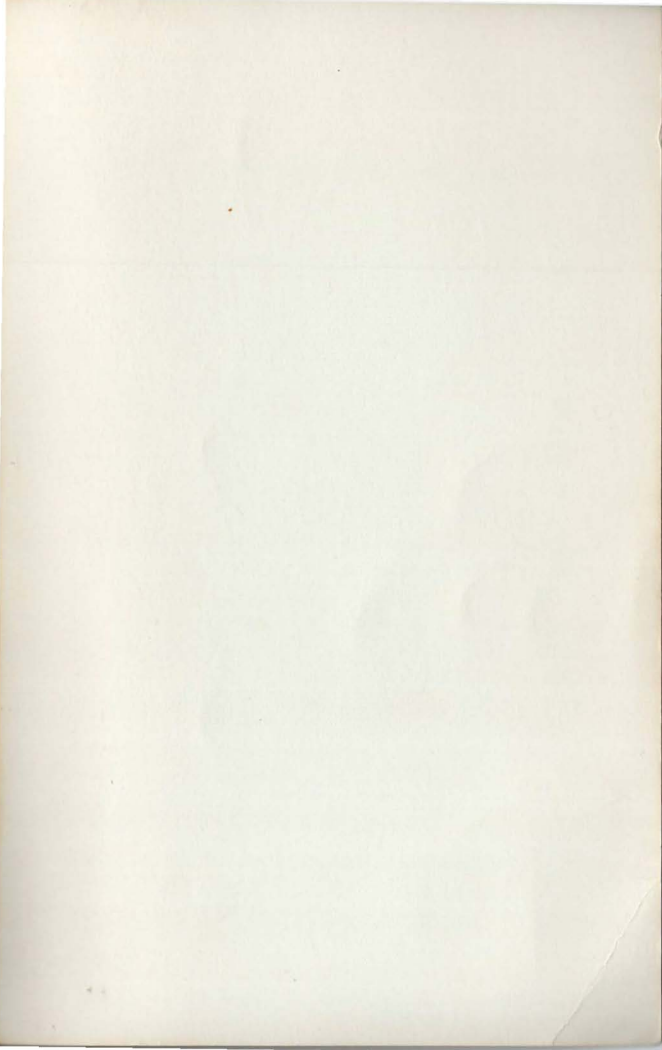
Isa. 24:1-25

Other Topics written at the time

It's You and My Lord, Allen Cherry

Mockery and the Negro by John P. Sawyer

The Church and the Negro by John P. Sawyer



CAN A NEGRO FIND HAPPINESS IN THE MORMON CHURCH?

This is a story of the inner feelings and desires of a black person who wanted to establish dignity not only in herself, but also in the eyes of all persons.

For the Caucasian, this book gives a revealing account of the struggles the Blacks face in being accepted as a full partner in today's complex and sometimes disturbing world.

Wynetta Martin, through the love and understanding of a kind lady, finds that there is a Father in Heaven who has concern for all of His children, and that His plan of salvation is intended for everyone.

Blacks not of the LDS faith will gain a better understanding of the saving principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and that within His church there is a place for all of the children of God.

